



11th June 2020

United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics – May 2020

Due to the increased strain Covid-19 is having on the Livestock industry, our survey response were lower than usual at 85%. To compensate we have made greater use of the Food Standards Agency throughput data to maintain coverage. This may impact on how within species numbers are split amongst their classifications; such as how sheep numbers are split amongst clean sheep and ewe & rams.

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Key points

The key results for **May 2020 compared to May 2019** are:

- **Cattle:** UK prime cattle (steers, heifers and young bulls) slaughterings in May 2020 were down 12% on May 2019 at 156,000 head. Beef and veal production was 68,000 tonnes, 13% lower than in May 2019.
- **Sheep:** UK clean sheep slaughterings were down 22% on May 2019 at 766,000 head. Mutton and lamb production was 18,000 tonnes, 26% lower than in May 2019.
- **Pigs:** UK clean pig slaughterings were 12% lower than in May 2019 at 801,000 head. Pigmeat production was 71,000 tonnes, 11% lower than in May 2019.

Response rates for March were 85% for England and Wales.

This notice will be updated at 09:30 on Thursday 16th July 2020. Additional time series which include weekly slaughter averages, production and trade data can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/cattle-sheep-and-pig-slaughter>

Enquiries on this publication to: Julie Rumsey, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Room 201, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1 - 2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX.
Tel: ++ 44 (0)2080 266306, email: julie.rumsey@defra.gov.uk

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Section 1: Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 1 shows monthly estimates of the number of home killed cattle, sheep and pigs, slaughtered as meat for human consumption in UK abattoirs.

Table 1: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered

	thousand head				
	May 2019 31 days	March 2020 31 days	April 2020 30 days	May 2020 31 days	yr on yr % change
Steers	89	92	77	75	-16%
Heifers	68	77	65	65	-5.0%
Young Bulls	19	15	15	16	-13%
Cows and Adult Bulls	51	56	45	44	-15%
Calves	9	13	7	5	-50%
Clean Sheep	987	925	843	766	-22%
Ewes and Rams	136	133	148	84	-39%
Clean Pigs	914	947	913	801	-12%
Sows and Boars	22	21	23	15	-31%

(1) The definition of calves from May 2014 is "Bovines less than 1 year". Please see methodology for full details.

Section 2: Average dressed carcass weights ⁽²⁾

Table 2 shows the monthly average dressed carcass weight (DCW) of livestock slaughtered for meat for human consumption in the United Kingdom. The large increase in carcass weight for calves is due to a larger reduction in the number of light calves seen at the slaughterhouse.

Table 2: United Kingdom average dressed carcass weights ⁽²⁾

	kilogramme			
	May 2019	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020
Steers	365.9	365.6	364.8	361.6
Heifers	326.2	330.3	328.3	328.1
Young Bulls	345.4	335.8	342.7	346.5
Cows and Adult Bulls	313.1	313.2	312.6	306.8
Calves	68.3	52.2	74.1	100.9
Clean Sheep	20.6	20.3	20.5	20.3
Ewes and Rams	28.4	25.4	25.9	28.4
Clean Pigs	84.2	86.6	86.1	86.1
Sows and Boars	147.0	141.7	142.6	142.6

Section 3: Monthly volumes of home killed meat production

Table 3 shows the monthly volumes of meat produced in UK abattoirs.

Table 3: United Kingdom monthly volumes of meat production

	thousand tonnes				
	May 2019 31 days	March 2020 31 days	April 2020 30 days	May 2020 31 days	yr on yr % change
Beef	78	82	69	68	-13%
Mutton and Lamb	24	22	21	18	-26%
Pigmeat	80	85	82	71	-11%

Section 4: Average weekly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered

Table 4 shows the average weekly slaughter figures for the last thirteen months. The monthly slaughter figures in section one are affected by the number of days in the survey period. To get a clearer measure of trends weekly averages are calculated using the number of livestock slaughtered and the number of days in each period.

Longer term trends can be seen in Figures 4:1, 4:2 and 4:3, following this table.

Table 4: United Kingdom average weekly numbers of livestock slaughtered

	thousand head												
	2019 May	2019 Jun	2019 Jul	2019 Aug	2019 Sep	2019 Oct	2019 Nov	2019 Dec	2020 Jan	2020 Feb	2020 Mar	2020 Apr	2020 May
Steers	20	18	18	18	21	22	22	18	20	20	21	18	17
Heifers	15	14	14	14	16	17	17	14	16	17	17	15	15
Young Bulls	4	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	4	4
Cows and Adult Bulls	12	12	12	12	14	17	16	13	14	13	13	10	10
Calves	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	1
Clean Sheep	223	212	246	283	278	294	289	269	235	202	209	197	173
Ewes and Rams	31	26	34	39	33	35	32	32	29	29	30	35	19
Clean Pigs	206	189	205	212	210	226	224	211	217	208	214	213	181
Sows and Boars	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	3

Figure 4:1 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of cattle slaughtered

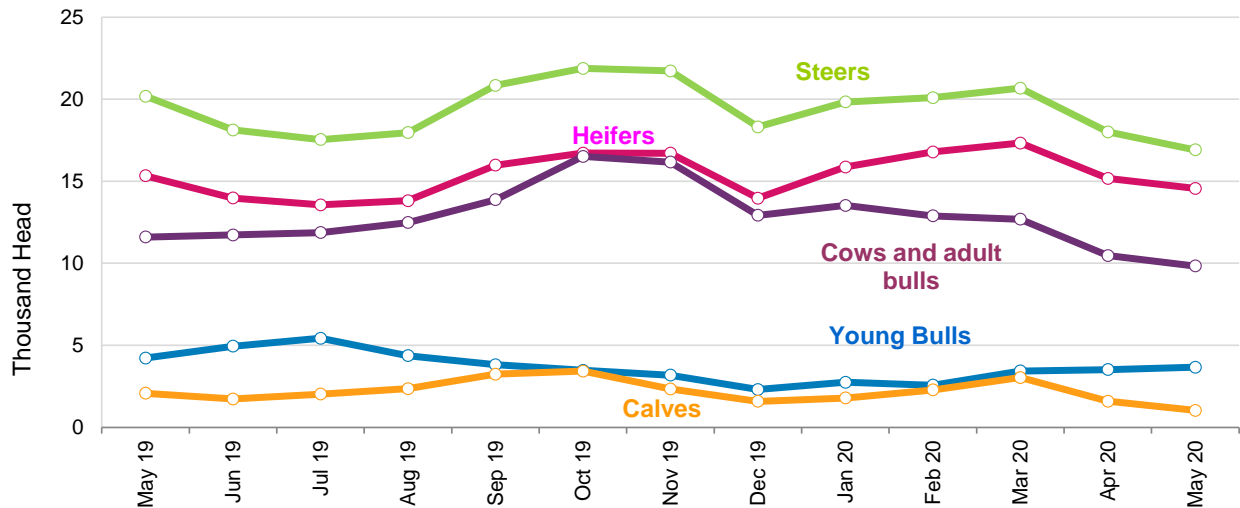


Figure 4:2 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of sheep slaughtered

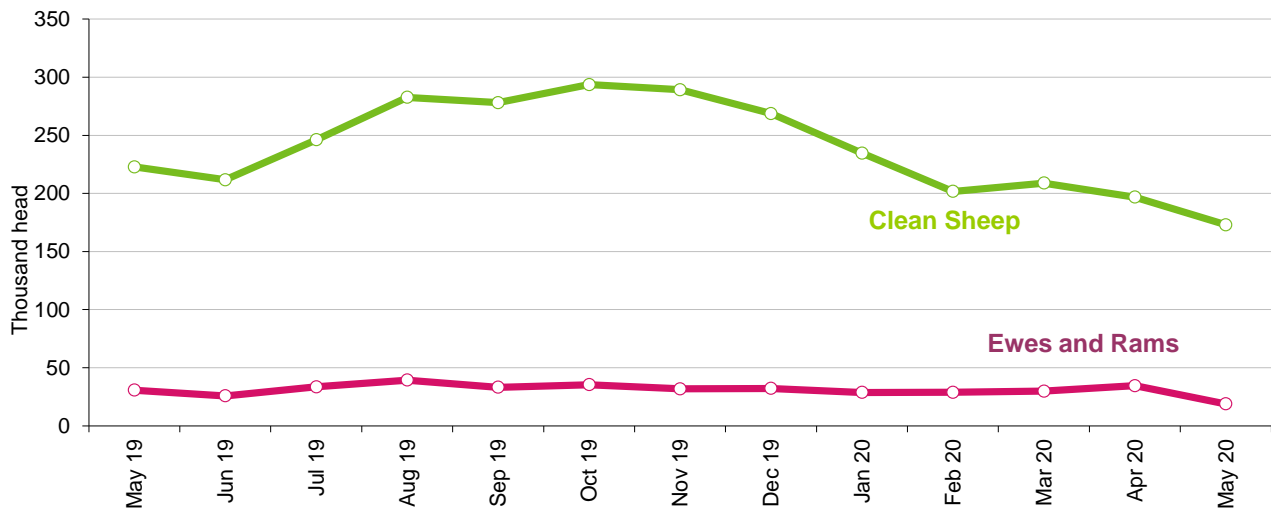
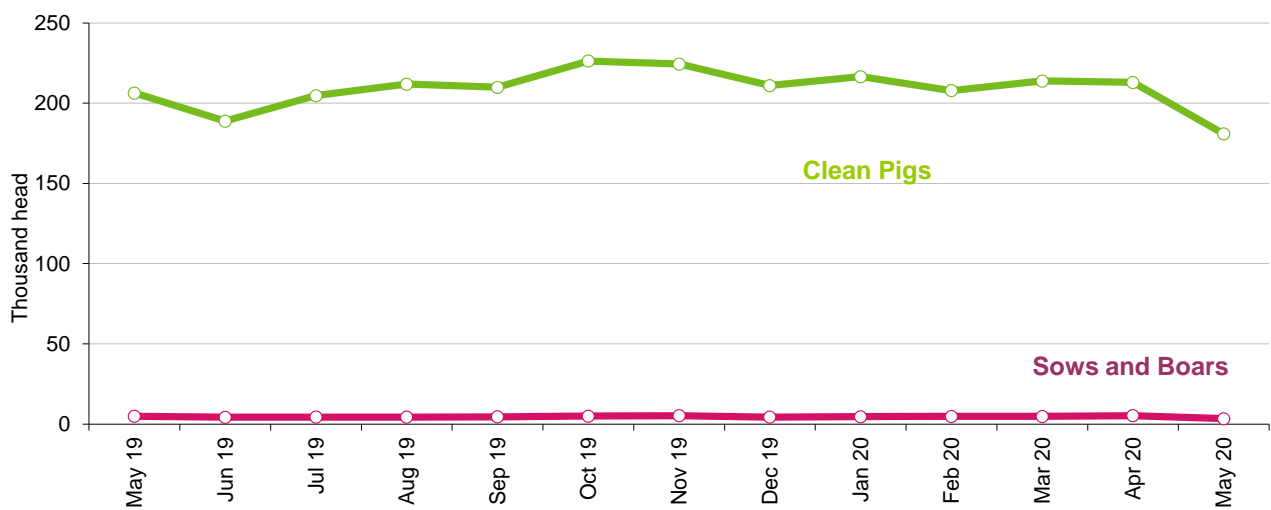


Figure 4:3 United Kingdom average weekly numbers of pigs slaughtered



Section 5: Monthly numbers of home killed livestock slaughtered by country

Table 5 shows monthly estimates of the number of cattle, sheep and pigs slaughtered for meat in England and Wales, Scotland, Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Table 5: United Kingdom monthly numbers of livestock slaughtered by country

	thousand head		
	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020
	31 days	30 days	31 days
England & Wales			
Steers	57	48	46
Heifers	49	42	42
Young Bulls	11	11	10
Cows and Adult Bulls	43	35	33
Calves	13	7	4
Clean Sheep	799	747	673
Ewes and Rams	130	146	80
Clean Pigs	754	734	620
Sows and Boars	20	22	14
Scotland			
Steers	19	16	17
Heifers	15	12	13
Young Bulls	1	2	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	5	4	5
Calves	0	0	0
Clean Sheep	102	79	66
Ewes and Rams	1	1	1
Clean Pigs	31	27	28
Sows and Boars	1	1	1
Great Britain			
Steers	76	64	64
Heifers	64	54	55
Young Bulls	13	12	14
Cows and Adult Bulls	48	39	38
Calves	13	7	4
Clean Sheep	901	825	738
Ewes and Rams	131	148	82
Clean Pigs	784	761	648
Sows and Boars	21	23	15
Northern Ireland			
Steers	16	13	11
Heifers	13	11	9
Young Bulls	3	3	3
Cows and Adult Bulls	9	6	6
Calves	1	0	1
Clean Sheep	24	18	27
Ewes and Rams	1	1	2
Clean Pigs	163	152	153
Sows and Boars	0	0	0

Section 6: Data users, methodology, Definitions and revisions policy

Data users

1. Users of the data include the EU Commission where these slaughtering statistics are required monthly under Regulation no. EC.1165/2008. Detailed information on this legislation is available by selecting “Animal Production” at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/agriculture/legislation>. European level statistics on meat products (which includes data tables showing results at EU Member State level) are available at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Agricultural_products#Meat_and_milk
2. The livestock industry is also a major user of the data, including divisions of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB). AHDB Pork (formally known as BPEX, representing the English pig industry) and AHDB Beef and Lamb (formerly EBLEX, representing the English beef and sheep industry). Industry users rely heavily on the numbers of slaughterings and meat production to assess the current state of the industry and predict the available supplies of meat for the coming year. This, in turn, can affect meat prices and trade decisions on levels of imports and exports to maintain supply. Users have always been very keen for the slaughtering statistics to be produced as quickly as possible so that the data is still relevant. For this reason, we collect and publish these statistics to a very tight timetable, publishing within three weeks of the survey date. The “Market Intelligence” and “Market Outlook” Reports on the AHDB Beef and Lamb website refer consistently to our statistics at <http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/markets/> The AHDB Pork site provides more in-depth analysis of pigmeat production statistics at <http://pork.ahdb.org.uk/prices-stats/>
3. Contact details are available on the front page of this notice, for you to send feedback or ask questions about the information provided.

Methodology

4. Defra runs a monthly survey of registered England and Wales slaughterhouses. It is a statutory survey (approximately 85) that collects information on livestock slaughter numbers and weight of meat produced. All major slaughterhouses participate in the survey and the response rate is typically 100%. Similar surveys are run by RERAD in Scotland and by DAERA in Northern Ireland. Scottish statistics on livestock slaughterings are available in the Economic Report on Scottish Agriculture at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Agriculture-Fisheries/PubEconomicReport> (Tables A5 and A6). This website also contains contact details and more information. Northern Ireland results are available at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/slaughtering-cattle-and-sheep> and <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/slaughtering-pigs-2003>
5. The England and Wales slaughter survey accounts for around 90% of the E&W slaughterhouse throughput for each livestock type. These data are supplemented by administrative data from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) for smaller slaughterhouses to give complete monthly coverage of livestock slaughterings.

6. Information on the weight of meat produced from a sample of animals weighed at slaughterhouses is obtained from survey respondents, around 55 slaughterhouse respondents. From the information provided average dressed carcase weights for each animal type are primarily calculated by adding up the total weight of the meat produced and dividing by the number of animals weighed. Cold dressed carcase weights are recorded.
7. The volume of meat production is estimated from the number of all livestock slaughtered and average dressed carcase weight information collected. This total 'Home killed' production includes livestock imported into the United Kingdom for slaughter.
8. The data are subject to a variety of validation checks which identify inconsistencies in the data. All data are cleaned prior to publication in discussion with the survey respondents.
9. With effect from February 2016 the statistics published in this notice are based on calendar rather than statistical months. This change simplifies our survey processes and brings our slaughter survey in line with our milk surveys which are already run on a calendar month basis; it also removes the need for the 53 week year (which would have to be 2016). Since the end of weekly slaughter survey several years ago, there is no legislative requirement for weekly data, so since then we have derived the average weekly throughput from the monthly survey data.
10. The January 2016 data will include the last week of December 2015 and therefore be classed as a 5 week month. From 1st February 2016 onwards the statistics are based on calendar months.
11. We have carried out a review of the methodology for calculating the dressed carcase weights in order to align with UK specifications. Some slaughterhouses provide Cattle Dressed Carcase Weights (DCW) including Kidney Knob and Channel Fat (KKCF); some slaughterhouses provide pig weights at EC specification. From September 2019 cattle DCWs are calculated to UK specification which excludes KKCF; Pigs are dressed to UK specification.
12. To calculate the DCW of animals by category:
 - a. If the slaughterhouse includes KKCF in the total weight, a deduction of 3.9% occurs. This aligns to the UK DCW specification.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-beef-carcase-classification-scheme-classify-carcases>
 - b. If pigs are dressed to EC specification then an increase of 1.6% to the DCW occurs to align with UK specification.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-pig-carcase-grading-scheme-dress-and-grade-carcases>
13. Some slaughterhouses specialise for niche markets. These slaughterhouses are treated separately so their DCW are not used to raise the data for those slaughterhouses who do not provide DCW data.
14. Data have been revised to January 2018 using the new methodology. If you have any questions or comments we are happy to discuss. Please contact us at DEFRA.FISU@defra.gov.uk

Definitions

15. Steers (or Bullocks): Castrated males over 1 year old, raised for beef.

Heifers: Female animals that have not calved. Over 1 year old, raised for beef.

Young bulls: Non-castrated young males, raised for beef, generally slaughtered around 13 months old.

Prime cattle: All those raised specifically for beef production. Total of Steers + Heifers + Young Bulls.

Breeding bulls: Older cull males, previously used for breeding

Cows: Older cull females, previously used for breeding

Calves: All bovine animals aged 1 year old or younger. Prior to May 2014, the definition was “animals weighing less than 165kg”.

Revisions policy

16. Figures in this notice are provisional and subject to revision. We will provide information about any revisions we make to previously published information in this statistics notice and the associated datasets. Revisions could occur for various reasons, including:

- a. if we have not received survey data from respondents we make an estimate based on their previous returns. These estimates will be replaced with actual survey data when it is received.
- b. survey respondents occasionally supply amended figures for previous periods.
- c. if we have not received administrative data for the smaller slaughterhouses we make an estimate based on previous data received. These estimates will be replaced with actual data when it is received.

National Statistics status

17. National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

18. The statistics last underwent a full assessment [[Assessment Report 271 Statistics on Agriculture](#)] against the [Code of Practice for Statistics in 2014](#).

19. Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics and have enhanced data quality by reviewing methodologies and data sources.